Radical Grace and the Economy

Module VIII. Denial of Mother Earth

This is *Section VIII* of the broader workbook called
Radical Grace and the Economy

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Abusing God's Garden

The attitude that the land is just there for the taking, and its abuse carries no serious consequences.

Issues

- *Pile of Resources — there for the taking.*
  - ✓ The land is treated as just a pile of resources, there for the taking.
  - ✓ Conventional economics considers the land to be expendable, waiting to be exploited by humans.
- *Unconstrained Extraction.*
  - ✓ Unconstrained extraction is not harmless.
  - ✓ Resource extraction may enable economic growth, but an economy without limits tends to be unstable. Like unconstrained expansion within any container, it'll burst the container in time.
- *No Respect.*
  - ✓ Even if we rein in economic growth until it's sustainable, that's still not showing respect for the living system that is Mother Earth.
- *No Attempt.*
  - ✓ The growth imperative doesn't permit respect for Mother Earth. Economic growth dominates policy agendas.

Discussion Questions

1. **"Let them have dominion."** (Genesis) Does the Bible give us permission to strip the planet bare?
2. **Why is it so easy for people** to treat the land as a pile of dirt there for the taking?
3. **Why do people to think they can keep demanding** more and more from our economy without Mother Earth rebelling? Why is the mantra of economic growth accepted without hesitation?

No Concept of Creation Care

The lack of attention to caring for and nurturing creation, as a human responsibility.

Issues

- *Seeking Balance*
  - ✓ We must strive to maintain the healthy balance that the ecosystem needs in order to live in a robust state.
  - ✓ We are a tiny vulnerable part of that ecosystem. We should want the whole family of Mother Earth to survive.
- *Healthy Integration*
  - ✓ We must seek a healthy integration with all those who share the land.
  - ✓ We can't thrive when all around us is in crisis. Our health as a species depends on being one with a healthy whole.
- *Nurture Mother Earth*
  - ✓ We must care for creation lovingly, with mutual compassion, respect and a nurturing spirit.
  - ✓ We must Humans will not flourish without the natural world flourishing.

Discussion Questions

1. **What is it that's out of balance?** What needs to be in balance in a healthy ecosystem?
2. **Why can't human flourishing** be separated from planetary flourishing?
3. **Why do people look away** from such an urgent need?

The Land is Holy

The need to cherish our living environment and those with whom we share it.

Issues

- *A Moral Responsibility*
  - ✓ We must have a moral responsibility to live in love and gratitude for Mother Earth.
  - ✓ We We must respect her needs and pleasures, living a lifestyle that harmonizes with her rhythms and returns the love that creation lavishes upon us.
- *Mere Survival Not Enough*
  - ✓ To survive is not all that God has commissioned us to do.
  - ✓ We're expected to care for Mother Earth, build a relationship of mutual nurturing, and seek her forgiveness when we ask for too much.
- *Love Your Neighbour(hood)*
  - ✓ Show our respect. Show our gratitude. Show our generosity.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why isn't it good enough just to save ourselves** from self-imposed destruction — rather than nurture God's garden out of love for creation? Can we change the message?
2. **How does human behaviour** in our culture need to change to create a reverence for creation and a passion to preserve her health?

The Land is Vulnerable

We violate Mother Earth and think we have a right to do that.

Issues

- *A Threat to Viability*
  - ✓ Resources are not viable when exploited beyond recovery without constraint or oversight.
  - ✓ An environment is not stable when industrial spillovers are left to run wild with no regulation.
  - ✓ Both constitute abuse of the delicate creature that is Earth. A culture of stripping and fowling the land has no future.
- *Economic Apologists*
  - ✓ Apologists for economics say that people are autonomous individuals, beholden to no one, with the right to take whatever we want — and nature is just there to give it all to us.
  - ✓ They've convinced us that it's proper behaviour to take all we can to satisfy our sacred human appetites.
  - ✓ Nature is there for the raping.
- *Challenging Immoral Narratives*
  - ✓ Most people aren't well enough informed to address economic and ecological technicalities.
  - ✓ Yet many people have a good sense of society's moral failings which lie at the root of widespread abuse of the land.

Discussion Questions

1. **Some would say we're romanticizing the land** when we fancy it to be "Mother Earth". Can a pile of dirt really be abused? Is it delusional to anthropomorphize the land?
2. **Economists say we're autonomous individuals** with the right to use resources as we see fit, if we can manage the reserves we extract and the spillovers we generate. Is it ok to bend creation to our wills in order to satisfy our every appetite, as long as we throw in a little regulation?
3. **Is there any prospect** of reversing a mindset of impunity that is ingrained into us from day one?

Franciscan Reverence for Creation

Franciscans identify with the entire family of God, from the earth beneath our feet to all the creatures that live upon it.

Issues

- *Franciscans Stand with Creation*
  - ✓ Creation is a system that extends far beyond the reach of humans, and has a significance we can only vaguely imagine.
  - ✓ It's impossible to think of one's individual fulfillment apart from the integrity of the whole.
- *No Mere Environmentalists*
  - ✓ We diminish Franciscans if we just see them as environmentalists.
  - ✓ They're lovers of the great spirit of Mother Earth.
  - ✓ St. Francis celebrated "brother dirt".
  - ✓ He and his followers lived and live in reverence of creation — all of it.
- *The Larger Life*
  - ✓ Franciscans strive to live the larger life of the whole of creation, as mere creatures among creatures — and revere the health and beauty of the larger body that is more than just us.
  - ✓ They call on us all to live in reverence of God's work of art, and show our worship in our daily stewardship of His magnificent creation.

Discussion Questions

1. **Is it stretching things a bit** to pray for "brother dirt"?
2. **Do you really view yourself** as part of the whole, a ripple in creation? Does that make you unimportant?
3. **What do you need to do differently** on a daily basis to be a truer steward of creation?

The Land is Family

Indigenous people seek harmony with all our relations in all of creation.

Issues

- One With the Land
  - ✓ Indigenous people embody the principle of being one with the land, and being but one among the Great Spirit's creatures.
  - ✓ Hunting other creatures but asking their forgiveness is a natural tradition.
  - ✓ Walking on the earth leaving no damage behind is in their blood.
- *All Our Relations*
  - ✓ We must honour all our relations who live in the land, sea or sky — with a respect for all forms of life — from family to community to all creatures and to all of creation.
- *Resisting Corruption*
  - ✓ Settlers have tried to corrupt them with their exploitative values, but only to limited effect.
  - ✓ Some of them are drawn in by alien values and broken. We pray for their healing.
  - ✓ Others stand proudly with their Creator, accepting all of creation as family and striving for the larger harmony.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why do some indigenous hunters ask forgiveness** from their prey? In what other ways can we seek our one-ness with creation?
2. **How do we carry the indigenous tradition** of "walk lightly on Mother Earth" over to a jaded population? What are we asking them to give up?
3. **How do we carry the indigenous perspective** of "all my relations" over to a freakishly individualistic population? Can they really change?

Rein in the Mindset

A culture of exploitation and destruction, which threatens the well-being of creation itself, needs to be discredited and healed.

Issues

- Violating God's Garden
  - ✓ Economic culture violating God's garden to satisfy our rapacious consumption is an aberration that will be hard to turn around.
  - ✓ We aren't even fully on board with preventing our own self-destruction — let alone nurturing creation.
  - ✓ Our self-indulgence and our tendency to self-delusion have sunk in deeply over the centuries.
- *Recapture the Mindset*
  - ✓ We have to control that obsessive consumer mindset that infects our economic culture and threatens the ecology that once used to nurture us.
  - ✓ We do have to work on carbon control and other measures to seek a little stability — but not to distract us from the sin of desecrating God's creation.
- *Seek Holy Ground*
  - ✓ We have to treat the earth as holy ground again, which we are charged to nurture. We're not going to do that without resurrecting a reverence for Mother Earth. We need to take some cues from indigenous leadership.

Discussion Questions

1. **Is the aberration of rapacious living curable?** How can centuries of self-delusion and self-indulgence be turned around?
2. **How can we make the land sacred again?** It is enough in a benumbed society to remind people that she's "Mother Earth"? How drastic need we be?
3. **Will the Earth ever be** God's Holy Garden again?

This is Module VIII. Denial of Mother Earth

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